United Nations CEDAW/C/BHS/6

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
31 May 2017

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

Sixth periodic report of States parties due in 2016

Bahamas*

[Date received: 4 April 2017]

* In accordance with the information transmitted to the States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document has not been edited.

Note: The present document is being circulated in English, French and Spanish only.

17-07753 (E) 140617

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List of abbreviations

BAHNROP	Bahamas Network of Rural Women Producers
BAIC	Bahamas Agricultural and Industrial Corporation
BASHRA	Bahamas Sexual Rights and Reproductive Health Association
BDB	Bahamas Development Bank
BEC	Bahamas Electricity Corporation
BRC	Bahamas Red Cross
BTC	Bahamas Telecommunications Corporation
BUYDC	Bahamas Urban Youth Development Centre
CAFRA	Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action
CANROP	Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers
CCELD15	Caribbean-Canada Emerging Leaders Dialogue
CBTUC	Commonwealth of The Bahamas Trade Union Congress
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DOI	Department of Immigration
DOL	Department of Labour
DOSS	Department of Social Services
DVCU	Domestic Violence and Counselling Unit
EWP	Exuma Woman Project
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FBOs	Faith-Based Organizations
FLHE	Family Life and Health Education
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GWP	General Worker Permit
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFAI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
MSM	Men who have Sex with Men
NCTUB	National Congress of Trade Unions Bahamas
NPDP	National Prescription Drug Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations

OAS	Organization of American States
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PACE	Providing Access to Continued Education
PAHO	Pan-American Health Organization
RAPP	Resistance and Prevention Programme
RBDF	Royal Bahamas Defence Force
RISE	Renewing, Inspiring, Sustaining, and Empowering Programme
RSP	Resident Spouse Permit
SAFE	Sexual Assault Follow-up Evaluation Unit
SASH	Society against Stigmatization and Hate
SCAN	Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Unit
SRC	Sandilands Rehabilitative Centre
SSN	Social Safety Net Unit
TCCP	Technical Cadet Corp Programme
TIP	Trafficking-in-Persons
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
URCA	Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority
WSC	Water and Sewerage Corporation

Introduction

1. The Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas is committed to enhancing the quality of life of all persons within its territory. With respect to women, the Government is making notable efforts to ensure that women are able to participate fully and equally in all aspects of Bahamian life. As stated in previous reports, The Bahamas ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on October 6th, 1993. The Government submitted its combined Initial to the Fourth Periodic Report in October 2009 and its Fifth Periodic Report in October 2011. In addition, The Bahamas submitted a follow-up report to the CEDAW Committee in 2014. The Government now presents its Sixth Periodic Report which contains developments relevant to the implementation of the Convention in The Bahamas for the period of January 2011 to May 2016. This present report also addresses the principal areas of concern and recommendations raised by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women subsequent to the Government of The Bahamas' appearance before the Committee in July 2012.

2. In March 2015, the Bureau of Women's Affairs formed a working group to aid in the preparation of this present report. The working group comprised officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the Ministry of Health, the Department of Statistics, the Department of Labour and the Department of Local Government. Information was gleaned from a vast array of additional governmental and non-governmental agencies. This report is divided into three parts. Part I provides an update of general background information about the country. Part II contains achievements pertaining to the substantive articles (i.e. Articles 1-16) of the CEDAW. Part III presents information on actions taken by the Government of The Bahamas, which correlate with the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations and Recommendations.

3. During the period under review, significant strides have been made to improve the status of all Bahamians. Some of these improvements which directly impact women were the creation of the National Task Force for Ending Gender-Based Violence in July 2013 and the development of consequent strategic and implementation plans; the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Committee and Task Force in July 2013; the enactment of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act in 2014; the establishment of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities in 2014; the development and launching of the Renewing, Inspiring, Sustaining, and Empowering (RISE) Programme (a poverty alleviation and empowerment initiative) in June 2015; and the near unanimous, bipartisan passage of four gender equality bills in Parliament in March 2016. The bills will go to the public in the form of a constitutional referendum in June 2016.

4. The Bahamas remains committed to the equal and equitable treatment of all persons within its borders and will continue in this regard.

Part 1

Article 1: Defining Discrimination against Women

5. The laws of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas with respect to discrimination against women are formulated in the Constitution and remain as previously reported. The Bahamas recognizes the need to reaffirm the principle of equality already existing in the Constitution. This need was realized when in August

2012, the Right Honourable Prime Minister Perry G. Christie appointed a Constitutional Commission to conduct a comprehensive review of the Constitution of The Bahamas, and to recommend changes to the Constitution in advance of the country's fortieth (40th) anniversary of Independence.

Constitutional Amendment Bills — Gender Equality Referendum

6. In July 2013, the Commission presented the *Report of the Constitutional Commission into a Review of The Bahamas Constitution*. The proposed amendments called for a national referendum — scheduled to be held on June 7, 2016. In this context, the Commission observed that "*We must therefore make the necessary amendments to our Constitution not only to satisfy a moral and social imperative of the first magnitude but also to enable us to comply fully with international norms and obligations.*" In the context of the referendum, the following Bills were introduced and passed in Parliament: and were to be subsequently voted upon by the populace:

The Constitution (Amendment) (No. 1) Bill 2014: Articles 8

> *"(1) A person born outside The Bahamas after the coming into operation of this Article shall become a citizen at the date of his birth if at that date HIS FATHER OR MOTHER is a citizen of The Bahamas otherwise than by virtue of this Article or Article 3(2) or Article 10 of the Constitution.*
>
> *(2) Paragraph (1) shall not affect the right of any person who was entitled to citizenship of The Bahamas by virtue of any provision of this Constitution in force before the coming into operation of this Article."*

The Constitution (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2014: Article 10

> *(1) A MAN OR WOMAN who, after the coming into operation of this Article, marries a person who is or becomes a citizen of The Bahamas shall be entitled, provided he or she is still so married, upon making application in such manner as may be prescribed and upon taking the oath of allegiance or such declaration as may be prescribed, to be registered as a citizen of The Bahamas: Provided that the right to be registered as a citizen of The Bahamas under this Article shall be subject to such exceptions or qualifications as may be prescribed in the interests of national Security or public policy or as set out in paragraph (2) of this Article.*
>
> *(2) A person may be denied registration under this Article if —*
>
> *there is satisfactory evidence that — (i) the marriage no longer subsists; (ii) the marriage was entered into for the purpose of enabling that person to acquire citizenship of The Bahamas; or (iii) the parties to the marriage have no intention of permanently co-habiting with each other as spouses, after marriage; or the person has been convicted in any country of criminal offence specified in any law which makes provision for such denial on the ground of such conviction.*
>
> *(3) Nothing in this Article shall affect the right of any person who was entitled to apply for citizenship of The Bahamas by virtue of any provisions of this Constitution in force before the coming into operation of this Article.*

The Constitution (Amendment) (No.3) Bill 2014: Article 14

> *(1) A reference in this Chapter to the father of a person born out of wedlock after the coming into operation of this paragraph, means a male who satisfies any requirements as to proof of paternity as may be prescribed. [...]*

(3) Any reference in this Chapter to the national status of the parent of a person at the time of that person's birth shall, in relation to a person born after the death of his parent, be construed as a reference to the national status of the parent at the time of the parent's death."

The Constitution (Amendment) (No.4) Bill 2014: Article 26

(a) In paragraph (3) and (5), by the deletion of the words "or creed" and the substitution therefore of the words "creed or sex"; and

(b) By the insertion immediately after paragraph 10, of the following new paragraph (11)-(11) in this Chapter, "sex" means being male or female.

7. As of June 2016, the Educational Team of the Commission made approximately two hundred and eighteen (218) presentations throughout the country to various government agencies, NGOs, religious organizations, public and private groups. During National Women's Week 2014, the Bureau, in conjunction with the Constitutional Commission's Education arm, held sessions on the proposed amendments to the Constitution on three (3) of the most populated Family Islands.

Article 2: Obligations to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women

8. The Government of The Bahamas has been active in raising awareness about the Convention and about the need to address all forms of discrimination.

Reservations

9. As indicated in **Article 1** of this report. The Government of The Bahamas will be seeking to address reservations resultant from the mandated Constitutional Referendum.

Domestic Legislation

10. Additional legislation has been enacted which ensures the protection of females, in particular:

- The Amendment of the Sexual Offences Act 2014, which allowed the insertion of new sections 26A-26J into the Principal Act which establishes a Sex Offender Register and Registry;
- The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act aims to:
  a. Achieve opportunities for persons with disabilities;
  b. Eliminate discrimination on the basis of disabilities;
  c. Provide rights and rehabilitation and habitation of persons with disabilities; and
  d. Establish the national commission for person with disabilities.

International Agreements

11. Efforts have been made to maintain international obligations, as is evident in the accession and ratification of the following additional international agreements:

- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (Accession Date: 28 Sept. 2015);

- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (Accession Date: 28 Sep 2015);
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Signature Date: 24 Sep 2013); and
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Ratification Date: 28 Sep 2015).

Article 3: Development and Advancement of Women

12. The Government of The Bahamas has continued to work towards the development and advancement of women in The Bahamas. Generally, women have continued to advance meaningfully in areas such as: politics, education and employment. The Bahamas is working to give special attention to those women who are seen as specially disadvantaged such as women in the lower socio-economic classes, women with disabilities, women in the Family Islands (rural women) and migrant women as they are the most marginalized groups of women in the country.

Renewing, Inspiring, Sustaining, and Empowering (RISE) Programme

13. With respect to women living in poverty, the Government of The Bahamas has continued to address this issue by way of the initiatives mentioned in previous reports. During the period under review, the Government, with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank, has taken its commitment further by establishing the Social Safety Net Unit (SSN) within the Ministry of Social Services and Community Development. The laying of the groundwork to guarantee high quality service to beneficiaries of the programme began in late 2013. Then, in June 2015, the Ministry of Social Services and Community Development launched the new social safety net programme called Renewing, Inspiring, Sustaining, and Empowering (RISE), a conditional cash transfer programme, which aims to reduce the number of Bahamians living at or below the poverty level — the number of which rose from 9.3 per cent to 12.8 per cent from 2001 to 2013. RISE consolidates existing social programmes. Additionally, conditions have been established to ensure academic achievement and promote healthy lifestyles. Enrolment of clients into the RISE Programme began in March 2016 and by May 2016, 382 households had enrolled. The importance of this programme to women can be demonstrated by the results of a status quo survey conducted, at one of the centres on New Providence, which revealed that 72.16 per cent of the clients were female. According to the Department of Statistics 2013 Household Expenditure Survey, men represented 48.17 per cent of the poor, while women represented 51.83 per cent of the poor.

Notable Achievements of Women

14. In 2012, Bahamasair, the national airline of The Bahamas, promoted for the first time, three women to the post of captain. This was the first group of women appointed to this level since the inception of the airline 39 years ago, making aviation history.

15. The Bahamas Development Bank (BDB) saw the first female appointed to the office of Managing Director in September 2013. The Managing Director is the chief executive of the Bank.

16. Minister Glenys Hanna-Martin, Minister of Transport & Aviation, served as regional chair of the Caribbean Americas and Atlantic Region of the Commonwealth

Parliamentary Association in the year 2014 and also chaired a Special Call Meeting of that body in that same year.

17. In June 2014, Marion Bethel-Sears, who was nominated by the Bureau of Women's Affairs, became the 11th CARICOM Triennial Award Winner, in the category of gender and development.

18. Ms. Betty Roberts, FCIB, TEP, was the recipient of the Bahamas Financial Services Board's 2015 Lifetime Achievement Award, for outstanding, sustained contribution to the Financial Industry. On April 10, 2015, the Royal Bahamas Defence Force held a Changing of the Guard at Government House that featured a female Officer of the Guard for the first time in history. (Woman Sub-Lieutenant Natasha Walton).

19. In September 2015, the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture sponsored the participation (principal sponsor) of three young women in the Caribbean-Canada Emerging Leaders Dialogue (CCELD15), which is a unique leadership, development and educational initiative which takes place every four years.

20. In February 2016, the Bureau of Women's Affairs nominated the first Bahamian candidate to serve as expert on the CEDAW Committee.

National Machinery for the Advancement of Women

21. The Bureau of Women's Affairs (BWA) is the national machinery mandated to promote the advancement and empowerment of women in the country. BWA is mandated to monitor, evaluate and report on the implementation of international conventions adopted by the Government that impact women. Two of the international conventions that The Bahamas ratified include CEDAW (October 1993) and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women "Convention of Belem Do Para" (May 1995).

22. The BWA has been a member of the national committee on Trafficking-in-Persons and has since the previous report joined several working groups/committees tasked with coordinating national emergency response efforts, developing refugee/asylee legislation, and coordinating international reporting obligations.

23. In 2012, the BWA completed a five-year strategic plan for the anticipated expansion of the Bureau to a Department of Gender Affairs. Though the plan has not yet been operationalized, plans are underway to upgrade the unit to a Department of Family and Gender Affairs – as proposed in the recently developed National Strategic Plan for Ending Gender-Based Violence in The Bahamas. As mentioned in the previous report, the Bureau holds a monthly meeting with NGOs and interested women. These meetings are used as an opportunity to share information about issues impacting women in The Bahamas, and internationally, with a view to sensitizing the representatives in expectation of further impacting the entities they represent thus affecting the broader Bahamian population. The Bureau also oversaw the drafting of a National Gender Equality Policy, referred to in the previous periodic report.

24. As stated in previous reports, the BWA coordinates several events to commemorate women and also to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in The Bahamas. These events include: International Women's Day and National Women's Week. Both occasions are used to highlight the achievements of Bahamian women and to empower women by providing information pertaining to the impact of national and international activities on the full inclusion of women in society.

Article 4: Temporary Special Measures

25. In June 2015, in partial fulfilment of the commitment made by the Bureau in its two-year report to the CEDAW Committee, the Bureau, created a course entitled "Leadership for Women in Politics". The 6-week course was developed in partnership with the College of The Bahamas' Centre for Continuing Education and Extension Services included topics such as (i) Balancing Family and Public Life, (ii) Strategic Campaign Management, (iii) Parliamentary Procedures, (iv) Transformational Leadership, (v) Dynamics of Political Parties in The Bahamas: How Parties Function, and (vi) Public Speaking: Communications & the Media. Course presenters included former Cabinet Ministers, former parliamentarians, as well as senior government officials who encouraged women to consider political leadership roles. Nineteen women from a cross section of society participated in, and sixteen completed, the course. Subsequently, one of the participants was ratified as a candidate by one of the political parties.

Article 5: Sex Roles and Stereotyping

26. Despite males comprising the majority of heads of households (see Table 3 below), women continue to be the primary caregivers in the family. The Bureau of Women's Affairs strives to address the imbalance in perception by dialogue held at regular monthly meetings with women. As mentioned in previous reports, the work to ensure equality for women in law and in practice is ongoing for the Government.

Table 1
Private Dwellings by Sex of Head of Household (2014)

	Women	*Men*	*Total*	*% Women*
Household Size & Sex of Head	40 007	62 751	102 758	38.9%

Source: Department of Statistics (2010 Census).

Health and Family Life Education

27. Information relative to health and family life education remains largely unchanged other than those improvements indicated in the Gender equality access to health and family life section of **Article 10** of this Report.

Violent Behaviour between Spouses

28. The institution of marriage and the decision to enter there into is still generally highly regarded in The Bahamas. However, the perception regarding the acceptance of violent behaviour between spouses is evolving particularly as more women are educated, have greater access to employment opportunities, and are more aware including through the media. Women now also have greater access to counselling, legal, shelter, and other support services provided by the Government and civil society.

29. The perceptions of men regarding violence in marriage are varied. It is felt, however, that more men than women perceive violence between married people as acceptable. This perception may be rooted in the tradition of the man as the head of the household and the perception of male and female roles within the family. A recent study conducted by the College of The Bahamas revealed that young men still maintain this perception. It is noteworthy to mention that many men feel that

the male sex is superior to female and that they have the right, even a responsibility, to dominate the female. Sadly, there are also some women who share these views.

30. The Government of The Bahamas, including through the Bureau of Women's Affairs, continues to address harmful stereotypes. Indeed, it is envisaged that with the upgrade of the Bureau to the Department of Family and Gender Affairs, more emphasis would be placed on awareness-raising on gender stereotyping.

Conflict Resolution Education for Men and Women

31. Further to information previously submitted, The Department of Social Services, through the establishment of its Domestic Violence and Counselling Unit (DVCU) in 2014, has placed great value on the importance of helping victims of violence and their children through direct intervention and services. The Unit has not embarked on an official campaign to raise public awareness about violence against women, however, in November 2014, the Unit participated in a public exhibition hosted by the Department on the occasion of its 50th anniversary, and used the opportunity to raise awareness about intimate partner violence in the community. In February 2015, a representative from the Unit appeared on a local morning television programme to promote the Unit's services and to make the public more aware of the laws to protect women from violence.

Article 6: Suppression of the Exploitation of Women

Trafficking In Persons (TIP)

32. The national trafficking-in-persons bodies are the Inter-Ministry Committee for Trafficking-in-Persons (TIP Committee) and the Trafficking-in-Persons Task Force.

33. The Inter-Ministry Committee for Trafficking-in-Persons (TIP Committee) commenced its function in 2011. It is the coordinating body for policy matters relating to trafficking-in-persons. As such, it provides advice on trafficking matters and makes recommendations to strengthen national anti-trafficking initiatives, including through the identification of opportunities for training; dissemination of information; public awareness; and coordinating The Bahamas' reporting obligations to regional and international organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Organization of American States (OAS), and international cooperation.

34. The Trafficking-in-Persons Task Force (TIP Task Force) was established in March 2012. It is an operational body that takes matters forward and monitors these matters from the identification of a victim or potential victim to the prosecution of an alleged trafficker. The TIP Task Force is a forum for ensuring coordination between government agencies and nongovernmental organizations on trafficking-in-persons. Task Force members also include designated and specially trained "Victim Interviewers".

35. The National TIP Task Force and TIP Committee comprises persons from a range of government ministries and agencies, including the Royal Bahamas Police Force, Department of Public Prosecutions, Department of Immigration, Ministry of Health, Department of Social Services, Department of Labour, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education. It should be noted that the TIP Task Force includes as members, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, such as The Bahamas Red Cross Society, the Crisis Centre and local faith-based organizations (FBOs) that have the expertise necessary to provide assistance to potential and

trafficked victims. The TIP Committee is comprised of members from governmental agencies and invites nongovernmental organizations as appropriate.

36. In 2012, to ensure the effective implementation of the TIP Act, the TIP Committee and Task Force produced a number of documents, including: "*A Guide to Anti-trafficking in Persons*", which provides the protocols for relevant agencies; "*The National Anti-trafficking Strategy and Action Plan*", which is a results-based plan with specific strategies and timelines; and "*A Plan to Provide Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Persons and their Accompanying Dependent Children*", which outlines the agencies responsible and the nature of assistance available to victims.

37. With respect to international, regional and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination, the TIP Committee and Task Force collaborate with various foreign consuls in an effort to mitigate TIP. A special forum was held in March 2016 with the Filipino Association to raise awareness on initiatives to fight TIP. In March 2016, The Bahamas TIP Committee and Task Force held a video conference with Haitian and USA officials covering these matters to discuss best practices.

38. To strengthen the TIP Committee and Task Force, in-house and international trainings are ongoing. From 2013 to 2015, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) conducted a 36 month training to build the capacity of both the TIP Committee and Task Force. In 2014, representatives of the Committee and Task Force participated in special trainings in Kingston, Jamaica on a National Action Plan to prevent TIP. In May 2016, the USA conducted training on victim identification for the TIP Committee and Task Force, including first responders from the major Family Islands. Additionally, both the Police and Defence Forces have ongoing trainings on TIP for new recruits.

39. In 2014, the TIP Committee and Task Force launched an Education and Awareness Raising Programme to sensitize the population on TIP matters. Information sharing initiatives include (i) TIP brochure distribution, (ii) PSAs, (iii) Facebook presence, (iv) school visitations, (v) door to door visitations in local and vulnerable communities and (vi) sensitization seminars.

40. In July 2015, The Bahamas was ranked as a tier one country in a United States' State Department Report — up from the previous tier two ranking. This ranking is seen as an acknowledgement of the Country's commitment to its anti-trafficking efforts.

Prostitution

41. Prostitution remains a criminal offence in The Bahamas. However, there are NGO's that work to ensure that sex workers receive essential services. The Bahamas Urban Youth Development Centre (BUYDC) provides services for students engaged in transactional sex and has ramped up efforts to promote safe sex and HIV/AIDS prevention practices among young persons in the profession.

42. While the country does not support prostitution, provisions are made in the TIP Act to protect victims. Section 10 of the TIP Act states that "*Where a person provides evidence that he is a victim he shall not be liable to prosecution for any offence against the laws relating to immigration or prostitution, that is a direct result of the offence of trafficking in persons committed against him*".

Violence against Women

43. The Strategic Policy & Planning Branch of the Royal Bahamas Police Force reveals over a 10 year period (2003-2013) that 6,210 cases of sexual offences were

reported. The Strategic Plan of the National Task force on Gender-based Violence has collated the available statistical data on violence against women, and has called for a more strategic approach and intention towards collecting such information. Please see Annex I of this report for additional statistical data on rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, attempted murder, murder, and number of matters prosecuted since 2012, number of complaints since 2012 and number of convictions and types of sentencing.

National Strategic Plan for Addressing Gender-Based Violence

44. In July, 2012, the Government of The Bahamas partnered with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) to participate in "Strengthening State Accountability and Community Action for Ending Violence against Women Project". Building on these efforts, in July 2013, the Government appointed a National Task Force for Gender-Based Violence to oversee the "development, implementation and coordination of a national strategic plan to address gender-based violence". Comprised of experts from the legal, medical, national security, and non-profit sectors, the Task Force fulfilled the development aspect of its mandate and submitted its "Strategic Plan to Address Gender-Based Violence" in August 2015. The plan was presented to the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Perry Gladstone Christie, and tabled in Parliament in February 2016. In April 2016, officials from the regional UN Women office sponsored a two-day session to, inter alia, familiarize key stakeholders, including senior government administrators, with the proposed results-based framework for the implementation of activities proposed in the plan.

Domestic Violence Shelters

45. Further to information previously submitted, it must be noted that the Royal Bahamas Police Force works with an NGO-managed safe house for women who need a place of refuge from violence. In addition, both the Salvation Army and the Great Commission Ministries operate a shelter for homeless women including battered women.

Government Funding for NGOs Addressing GBV

46. To address gender-based violence, the Government provides grants to non-governmental and religious organizations to facilitate their work in support of victims of violence including through shelters and counselling services. For example, The Crisis Centre receives $30,000 per annum, The Links Safe House receives $75,000 per annum, The Salvation Army receives $75,000 per annum and Great Commission Ministries receives $73,000 per annum. The Bahamas AME Conference receives $20,000 per annum.

Promoting Awareness of Domestic Violence among Law Enforcement Officers

47. Further to information previously submitted, The Royal Bahamas Police Force has a strong commitment to informing the public and law enforcement officials about violence against women, particularly in the home. The following measures have been taken to make this possible.

A. Providing comprehensive instruction on domestic violence to every recruit squad that enters the Police Training College.

B. Engaging in partnership with organizations such as The Bahamas Crisis Centre, PACE (programme for teenage mothers), the College of The Bahamas, and Social Services.

C. Utilizing the police website to share information and tips on a variety of subjects that could benefit women (see ww.royalbahamaspolice.org)

D. The appointment of two senior female officers to the National Task Force on Eradicating Gender-Based Violence in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

E. Utilizing the Urban Renewal Centres to interact with community and provide referral services for victims. Utilizing trained officers as trainers in Resistance and Prevention Programme (RAPP) the goal is to teach others social crime prevention strategies. A component of the programme addresses domestic violence.

F. Utilizing the media to share relevant information compiled by the National Crime Prevention Office (Police Headquarters).

Law Enforcement Officers' Treatment of Sexually Assaulted Victims

48. Further to information previously submitted, whenever a domestic violence complaint is brought to the Police's attention, if it is a minor offence such as common assault, threats of harm or causing harm, a local police station is expected to address it according to Force Policies and the law (see the Penal Code Chapter 84, Sections 33-41 in Annex II of this report). These are guiding principles for the Police. However, if the matter is a major offence, it is handled by the Central Detective Unit. The officers in this Unit have received sensitivity training and have facilities that are conducive to good outcomes. The doctor has to write a report determining whether the injury is life-threatening — degree of harm would determine the category in which the case falls.

49. Victims of sexual assault are treated seriously, professionally and with confidentiality. Proper procedures are strictly adhered to according to law (see Chapter 99A Domestic Violence [Protection Order] Sections 27, 28 in Annex II of this report).

Special Measures to Deal with the Sexual Abuse of Children in The Bahamas

50. Further to information previously submitted, the Royal Bahamas Police Force employs special procedures for dealing with children who are sexually abused. Interviews must always be conducted in the presence of a parent, guardian or social worker. School Psychologists are also used when school-aged children are involved. If a child is under 12 years old, the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Unit is contacted. This is operated out of the Princess Margaret Hospital (the nation's main health facility). If the person is over 12 years, the Sexual Assault Follow-up Evaluation (SAFE) Unit is contacted and provides counselling and after care. The area used for such proceedings is away from the general public and suitably furnished. Additionally, a matter that is over 72 hours is classified as cold and under that time frame is considered fresh. In the case of the latter, a sexual assault evidence collection kit is used.

51. The Children and Family Services Unit of the Department of Social Services is considered the primary section with direct intervention in child maltreatment matters inclusive of sexual abuse.

Article 7: Political and Public Life

Equal Rights to Vote and Participation in Elections

52. As stated in the previous report, Bahamian women have the right to vote in elections and to participate in the political process on equal terms with men. On February 23, 1961, the Bill titled "An Act to enable women to have and exercise rights of registration as voters and of voting similar to those accorded to men under the provisions of the General Assembly Elections Act 1959" was passed and came into effect on June 30, 1961 thereby women received the right to vote. Full voting rights were exercised on November 26, 1962. As stated in The Bahamas' 2014 Follow-Up Report to the CEDAW Committee, The Bahamas held general elections on May 7, 2012.

2012 Electorate — by sex

53. There were 18,574 more women than men registered to vote. Records reflect that of the total number of 172,128 registered voters in the 2012 General Election, 54.2% were women, while 45.8% were men.

2012 Candidates — by sex

54. According to The Parliamentary Commissioner, those elections comprised one hundred and thirty-three (133) nominated candidates, eighteen (18) of whom were women. Per party, the distribution of females and males who were selected as candidates were as follows: Progressive Liberal Party, 5 women (15%), 33 men; Free National Movement, 9 women (31%), 29 men: Democratic National Alliance, 6 women (19%); 32 men, Independent candidates, 0 women, 14 men; Bahamas Constitution Party, 2 women (67%). 3 men, Therefore, thirteen per cent (13%) of all elected candidates were women. Subsequently, five women (thirty-one per cent) were appointed to the Honourable Senate (Upper House). 19% served in the Cabinet (See Table 4).

Table 2
Representation of Women — Parliament (2012)

Positions	*Women*	*Men*	*Total*	*% Women*
Members of Parliament	5	33	38	13%
Senators	5	11	16	31%
Total	**10**	**44**	**54**	**18.5%**
Members of Cabinet	4	17	21	19%

Table 3
Women in key positions in Parliament (2016)

Positions	*Women*	*Men*	*Total*	*% Women*
Prime Minister	0	1	1	0%
Attorney General	1	0	1	100%
Other Ministers	3	12	15	20%
Ministers of State	0	3	3	0%
Parliamentary Secretaries	1	2	3	33%
Opposition Leader	0	1	1	0%

Positions	*Women*	*Men*	*Total*	*% Women*
Speaker of the House	0	1	1	0%
President of the Senate	1	0	1	100%
Total	**6**	**20**	**26**	**23%**

Public Offices Held by Women

55. Presently, women hold a number of senior positions in public life, including Governor General, President of the Court of Appeal, Justices of the Supreme Court, Attorney General, President of the Senate, including several permanent secretaries. The Women in Leadership Ten Year Mapping (2004-2014), previously submitted in The Bahamas' Follow-Up Report of 2014 contains tables outlining key leadership positions held by women in the country during the period.

Factors Which Prevent Women's Political Participation

56. As stated in the previous report, there are no legal impediments, relative to the participation of women in the political process.

Women's Participation in the Design and Implementation of Development Planning at All Levels

57. Women are involved at all levels of development planning. In this context, it is worth mentioning that the Director of the Economic Development and Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's Office is a female.

Women's Participation in Trade Unions

58. Women do participate in Unions in The Bahamas as there are no factors to prevent their participation. According to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas Trade Union Congress, women have made up about 75 per cent of the executives of the Affiliate Unions. During the reporting period, there have been seven female presidents of these Unions. Measures have been taken over the years to increase their participation, particularly in international conferences.

59. According to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas Trade Union Congress (CBTUC), their membership comprises eighteen (18) affiliates and five (5) non-functioning affiliates. The National Congress of Trade Unions Bahamas (NCTUB) lists sixteen (16) affiliates with five (5) Observer Unions. Analysis of the leadership shows that women accounted for 25 per cent (See Table 6).

Table 4
Representation of Women — Trade Unions (2014)

Positions	*Women*	*Men*	*Total*	*% Women*
National Congress of Trade Unions	7	15	22	32%
Trade Union Congress	5	21	26	19%
Total	**12**	**36**	**48**	**25%**

Source: *Women in Leadership in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas 10 Year Mapping (2004-2014), Bureau of Women's Affairs.*

Legislation affecting Trade Unions — National Tripartite Council Act 2014

60. The House of Assembly passed the National Tripartite Council Act 2014 establishing a tripartite forum on labour and industrial relations. On March 3, 2015, Her Excellency Dame Marguerite Piddling, Governor General of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, formally signed the National Tripartite Council Act into law. Pursuant to section 9(4) of the National Tripartite Council Act 2014, the social partners formally submitted the persons to be appointed to the National Tripartite Council. The Act 2014 establishes a Council '*to advise the Government on the formulation of national policies and strategies on all aspects of labour, productivity, quality and competition' as well as 'to advise the Government on labour and industrial relations matters*'. On June 1, 2015, the National Tripartite Council held its first official council meeting in accordance with section 9(1) (a) of the National Tripartite Council Act.

61. In addition to enacting the aforementioned legislation, The Bahamas has ratified 35 ILO Conventions including eight of the core ones which particularly address protections of the rights of women and children in the workplace. The Bahamas continues to work on the implementation of these rights. Refer to previous reports for labour standards in The Bahamas.

Article 8: International Representation and Participation

Representation of Women at the International Level

62. As stated in previous reports, there are no legal impediments to women representing the Government at the international level. Women do in fact serve as representatives of The Bahamas at the international level. Currently, Her Excellency Alma Adams serves as Ambassador to the Republic of Cuba and Her Excellency Rhoda Jackson serves as Ambassador at the Permanent Mission to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva. Ms Paulette Zonicle serves as Consul General at The Bahamas Consulate General in Washington, DC. Ms. Julie Campbell serves as Counsellor at the Embassy in the People's Republic of China. Ms. Rosolyn Horton is the Minister Counsellor at the High Commission in Canada. Mrs. Allison Booker serves as the Deputy High Commissioner and Vice Consul at the High Commission in London. Mrs Tishka Fraser-Francis is the Deputy Permanent Representative at the Permanent Mission to the United Nations, New York, U.S.A. Ms. Sandra McLaughlin and Ms. Joy Newbold serve as Consul at the Consulate General in New York, U.S.A. Ms. Sandra Carey serves as Deputy Consul General for The Bahamas Consulate General in Miami, U.S.A. Ms. Bernadette Butler is the Minister Counsellor at the Permanent Mission in Geneva, Switzerland. It must be noted that of the six countries with representatives acting as Honorary Consul for The Bahamas, four are women.

Women in International Organizations

63. There are no restrictions prohibiting Bahamian women from working in international organizations. In fact, the Government consistently disseminates to both women and men information on employment opportunities and vacancies for international posts.

64. There are no records to indicate the exact number of Bahamian women working in international organizations. However, the Government is aware that several Bahamian women are employed by the United Nations in a senior capacity in addition to working with regional organizations such as CARICOM and agencies such as the Commonwealth Secretariat. As stated in previous reports, women

regularly represent The Bahamas at various international and regional meetings and continue to serve on regional and international bodies on behalf of the Government.

Women in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

65. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration serves as the Head of the Foreign Service of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. This position is currently held by a female, Ms. Sheila Carey, who also holds the title of Ambassador. Additionally, Ms. Sharon Brennen-Haylock holds the position of Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration. Women make up 25 per cent of The Bahamas' diplomatic and consular missions and men 65 per cent.

66. As previously reported, women in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs outnumber men. Statistics provided in previous reports indicate that women in The Bahamas and particularly throughout the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have achieved tremendous success.

Article 9: Nationality and Citizenship of Women and Their Children

Legal Rights in Nationality

67. No change since the last report. For additional information on the constitutional referendum on gender equality and nationality rights in The Bahamas, see Articles 1 and 2 of the present report.

Equality in Marriage to Non-Nationals

68. Inequality between women and men still exists in this regard as stated in the response under Article 2 of this present report.

Residential and Employment Status for Spouses who are Non-Nationals

69. Bahamian women and men have the same rights with respect of gaining residence and employment status for their spouse in situations where the spouse is a non-national. The primary permit that was purposely enacted for non-national spouse (of a Bahamian) is the Resident Spouse Permit (RSP) (Immigration Act, Section 30). Application has to be filed at the Department of Immigration for the non-national spouse and furnished with requisite documents as indicated on the form in addition to other information that might become relevant as established by the situation at hand. This permit enables the non-national spouse to reside and work legally in The Bahamas and may be issued for a period of one to five years. The period granted for RSP is decided based upon the outcome of the interview of the couple and whether the processing officer is satisfied that the marriage is genuine.

70. If a determination is made that the marriage might not be genuine and is not subsisting, the processing officer will recommend that the non-national spouse be granted a General Worker Permit (GWP) for one year. The fee for GWP is $1,000.00 per annum for the non-national spouse.

71. The Bahamian and his/her non-national spouse can elect also for a Permit to Reside only. This type of permit does not allow the non-national spouse to engage in gainful employment; the non-national spouses will have the legal right to reside only. The cost of this permit is $25.00 annually for non-nationals.

Administration of Refugee and Asylum Matters

72. There is no penalization of asylum-seekers for illegal entry and stay in The Bahamas. The Department of Immigration (DOI) instituted a section within its organization for the administration of Refugee/Asylum Matters since 2004 and this section has been actively interviewing and processing application for this category of persons from its establishment. The process is performed in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Officers of the DOI are trained and qualified to perform the relevant interviews and to make determinations and recommendations based on the interviews. All DOI recommendations regarding Refugee/Asylum status are submitted to UNHCR through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration.

73. In instances where UNHCR and DOI Refugee/Asylum do not agree, a recommendation is put forward for the placement of asylum-seekers in another country. The seeking and finalization of the placement of asylum-seekers is conducted by UNHCR and IOM.

74. DOI never engages in the forcible return or refoulment of refugees or asylum-seekers to a country where they are liable to be subjected to persecution. DOI cooperates fully with UNHCR and IOM. In accordance with international laws and standards, the asylum-seekers are not detained for lengthy periods. Immediately following the awareness that an application is made for Refugee/Asylum, officers from DOI Refugee/Asylum Section are directed to meet asylum-seekers and relocate them temporarily to the Detention Centre for the conduct of the interview process. Asylum-seekers are almost immediately released from detention after the conclusion of the interview and issued with an Asylum/Refugee Certificate from DOI on which their photo is affixed, which permits asylum-seekers to move about freely within The Commonwealth of The Bahamas The asylum-seekers are supported socially and financially by the Department of Social Services (DOSS) and The Bahamas Red Cross (BRC) including with regards to, housing, food, water and personal effects.

75. UNHCR, IOM and DOI Refugee/Asylum Section remains in constant communication with one another to ensure quality assurance and compliance with the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol. Officers of DOI Refugee/Asylum Section obtain ongoing training and relevant tools to remain up-to-date with respect to international expectations and requirements.

76. It is notable that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR held a Training Session on Refugee Protection and Statelessness in June 2014. The following Government agencies were represented in this exercise: Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF), Bureau of Women's Affairs (BWA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration (MFAI) and the Department of Immigration.

Detention of Women and Children

77. Women detainees with children are kept in separate accommodations, in keeping with international standards. In 2014, DOI established a safe house for this purpose outside the Carmichael Rd. Detention Centre. There is a fully-equipped multi-family accommodation with adequate outdoor recreation space for children. The facility is administered by DOI and twenty-four hour security is provided by the Royal Bahamas Defence Force. There is a full-time social worker, cook, and janitor. The Bahamas Red Cross assists with donations of clothing, blankets, toiletries and miscellaneous items as necessary for the women and children.

Article 10: Ensuring Equal Access for Women in Education

78. The information on Access to Education and Literacy Rates remains unchanged since the last report.

Trends in Academic Achievement for Boys and Girls

79. The Department of Education has seen notable improvements in educational achievements since 2011 with 50.5% of students achieving grades of C or above in 2015 compared to 44.38% in 2011. The 2015 results represent a turning point in the education systems as for the first time, the average grade was a C. Further, there was evidence of the closing of the gender gap. While in absolute terms in 2015 more females received high grades, a larger percentage of males that sat exams achieved more favourable outcomes than females (53% and 47.1% respectively).

The National Training Agency

80. The Fifth Periodic Report mentioned the implementation of a technical and vocational education and training (TVET) body. Such an entity was created by virtue of the National Training Agency Act of 2013. Though Part V, Section 24 of the Act states that "A person who makes application to the Board in the prescribed form and satisfies the Board that he possesses the prescribed qualifications may be eligible for selection as a trainee", it is understood that females would not be discriminated against. To this end, it should be noted that the Executive Director of the Agency is female.

81. Targeting young persons aged 16-26 years; the Agency has graduated 6 cohorts since its inception. The programme is designed to equip youth with skills to render them employable. For this effort, the Government of The Bahamas has established relationships with the private sector — wherein individuals in the programme receive practical training within a variety of fields. The majority of individuals enrolled in, and placed for employment as a result of, the training programme are female.

Grants and Scholarships

82. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology continues its mission to provide opportunities to access quality education, "equipping students with the knowledge, beliefs, skills, and attitudes required to live and work in an interdependent changing world". One means of making provisions for this to happen is to facilitate access to education at the tertiary level. From 2012 to 2015, the Government awarded a total of 2,319 scholarships to Bahamian students with 1,521 recipients being female, forming 65.6% of the total awardees (See Table 7).

Table 5
Government Scholarships Awarded by Sex (2012-2015)

Year	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*	*% Females*
2012	352	190	542	64.9%
2013	396	196	592	66.8%
2014	352	180	532	66.1%
2015	421	232	653	64.5%
Total	**1 521**	**798**	**2 319**	**65.6%**

Source: Department of Education.

Financial Aid Available to Students at the College of The Bahamas

83. As indicated in the table below, financial aid is available specifically for the students at the College of The Bahamas. In relation to the distribution of grants and scholarships for the year 2015, the breakdown by sex is 754 males and 2144 females.

Table 6
Scholarships, Grants & Other Awards (Public & Private) available to students at the College of The Bahamas Awarded by Sex (2012-2015)

Period	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*	*% Females*
2011-2012	1 836	592	2 428	75.61%
2012-2013	1 826	622	2 448	74.59%
2013-2014	1 975	666	2 641	74.78%
2014-2015	1 986	681	2 667	74.46%
2015-2016	2 144	754	2 898	73.98%
Total	**9 767**	**3 315**	**13 082**	**74.68%**

Source: College of The Bahamas.

Public Schools Scholar Program

84. Since the Fifth Periodic Report, The Government implemented the Public Schools Scholar Program in 2015. This program seeks to send public school students to college with the help of partner international colleges and universities. The students must meet the requirements of the education institutions. Priority is given to students who will be the first in their families to attend college. In 2015, eighteen students were selected to receive this grant which ranged from $7,500 to $10,000 per year. The partnering international institutions are required to offer a grant of equal or greater value. Of the eighteen recipients of 2015, twelve were females.

The All Bahamas Merit Scholarship

85. The Bahamas also has The All Bahamas Merit Scholarship. This award is given to outstanding students who not only display academic excellence throughout their high school career but also are considered to be students who have achieved in several areas of life including community service, athletics, and extracurricular activities. Within the reporting period, one female student has received the All Bahamas Merit Scholarship.

The Gerace Scholarship

86. The Gerace Scholarship is another award given as a result of an agreement between the Government of The Bahamas, the Gerace Research Centre and several post-secondary institutions. The College of The Bahamas' Gerace Research Centre is a natural science research and education facility located on San Salvador — one of the Family Islands. Costs of attendance for scholarship recipients are shared by the participating institutions. During the reporting period, 56% of the scholarship recipients were female.

Table 7
Gerace Scholarships awarded by Sex (2012-2015)

Year	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*	*% Females*
2012	3	5	8	37.5%
2013	3	3	6	50%
2014	4	1	5	80%
2015	4	2	6	66.7%
Total	**14**	**11**	**25**	**56%**

Source: Department of Education.

Technical Cadet Corp Programme

87. The Technical Cadet Corp Programme (TCCP) is a three year programme facilitated by the Government in which students are offered technical and vocational hands-on-experience in high school, beginning from the tenth grade. All of the students have an opportunity to be exposed to various technical subjects so as to assist them in acquiring the necessary skills to succeed in a technologically advanced society. Additionally, all of the students have the opportunity to explore and take advantage of various additional educational services. Over the course of a three year period, students who demonstrate some degree of interest and proficiency in the technical areas are provided an opportunity to learn the necessary behaviours, attitudes and discipline needed to work in such environments. These agencies included (BTC), (BEC), (WSC) and the Ministry of Education. Although the TCCP has been in existence for 28 years, the statistical review over a four year period displays a clear disparity among the enrolled students in the programme. There is need for the further advancement of female participation in this programme in order to reduce the gender gap.

Table 8
Technical Cadets Corps Programme (TCCP) Scholarships Awards Review (2011-2015)

Scholarships Awarded	*2011-2012*	*2012-2013*	*2013-2014*	*2014-2015*	*2015-2016*
Bahamas Electricity Corporation (BEC)					
Males	0	2	2	1	2
Females	2	0	0	1	0
Bahamas Telecommunications Company (BTC)					
Males	1	2	1	2	0
Females	1	0	1	0	1
Water & Sewage (WSC)					
Males	1	1	1	1	1
Females	1	0	1	0	1
Ministry of Education					
Males	1	1	2	2	4

Scholarships Awarded	*2011-2012*	*2012-2013*	*2013-2014*	*2014-2015*	*2015-2016*
Females	1	1	0	0	0
Total Awards	**8**	**7**	**8**	**7**	**9**
Total Male	**3**	**6**	**6**	**6**	**7**
Total Female	**5**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**2**

Source: Department of Education.

Public Teachers in The Bahamas by Sex

88. Though there are no legal barriers preventing men from joining the public school system as teachers, the profession remains female-dominant (See Table 11 below).

Table 9
Public Teachers in The Bahamas by Sex (2010-2013)

Sex	*2010/11*	*2011/12*	*2012/13*
Male	579 (18%)	495 (17%)	542 (17%)
Female	2 651 (82%)	2 351 (83%)	2 569 (83%)
Total	**3 230**	**2 846**	**3 111**

Source: Department of Education.

School Principals and Heads of Departments who are Women

89. There are a total of 605 school administrators in The Bahamas. A school administrator in The Bahamas refers to a Principal, Vice-Principal and Senior Master or Mistress. Of this number, 383 are females (63.3% of public school administrators).

Gender Equal Access to Health and Family Life

90. The information contained in paragraphs 99-113 of the Fifth Report remains largely unchanged with the exception of the revision of Family Life and Health Education (FLHE) Curriculum, in primary school, which was completed in 2012. The revised version of the curriculum was approved and posted on the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology's website in 2013 — hard copies and CDs of the curriculum were also distributed. Gender stereotypes and gender equality were addressed in content of the FLHE curriculum.

Girls in ICT

91. Though girls are generally outperforming boys in school, it is thought that fewer girls are in ICT than boys (no data was available to confirm this). In an effort to address this perceived disparity, the country now commemorates Girls in ICT Day. The Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority (URCA), Cable Bahamas and Bahamas Telecommunications Company (BTC) and other sector licensees facilitated a one-day 'Girls in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Day' Forum and Mini-Fair during April 2015. The purpose of the event is to:

1. Equip young girls with knowledge about the ICT sector;

2. To promote confidence about the potential role of women in the ICT sector; as well as

3. To expose them to a myriad of career opportunities.

92. In the 2016 commemoration of Girls in ICT, the program included Family Island female students in its celebrations. At the Forum and Mini-Fair, the Attorney General urged female students to 'get into the ICT field' and noted that the ICT curriculum in Bahamian schools is currently under review to ensure that what is offered locally to students is relative to the global approach to ICT.

Sex Segregation in Higher Education

Professors at the College of The Bahamas by Sex (2016)

93. Of the 207 university professors at the College of The Bahamas in 2016, 132 were female and 75 were male.

Table 10
Percentage of Women Graduating from the College of The Bahamas (January 1, 2011-March 31, 2016)

Graduating Fields	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*
Medicine	0	0	0	0	0
Law	13 (2.78%)	38 (6.67%)	23 (3.90%)	24 (5.13%)	29 (5.79%)
Engineering	1 (0.021%)	4 (0.70%)	1 (0.17%)	4 (0.21%)	1 (0.20%)
Sciences	24 (5.13%)	48 (8.42%)	44 (7.47%)	39 (8.33%)	59 (11.78%)
Agriculture	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: *Office of the Registrar of the College of The Bahamas*.

94. The information in this table depicts the percentage of women who have graduated from The College of The Bahamas in the fields of Medicine, Law, Engineering, Science and Agriculture. While The College of The Bahamas offers a programme in Agriculture, no women have graduated with the degree in this discipline during this period. Please note that the College of The Bahamas does not offer a degree in medicine. When compared to the percentage of women to men in the country, the percentage of women who graduated in the relevant fields is significantly low.

Table 11
Percentage of Women Graduating from The Bahamas Technical & Vocational Institute (BTVI)

(School Year: 2013-2014) Degrees, Diplomas and Certificate Programmes

Programme	*Graduating Field*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Associate of Applied Science	Office Administration	9	16	26
	Business Office Technology	4	5	9
	Construction Technology	2	0	2
	Information Technology Management	4	0	4
Diploma	Cosmetology	0	27	27
	Fashion Design Production II	0	5	5

Programme	*Graduating Field*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Certificate	Auto Collision	7	0	7
	Auto Mechanics	8	0	8
	Barbering	5	0	5
	Carpentry	1	1	2
	Computer Repair	6	1	7
	Electronics & Cable Installation	4	0	4
	Electrical Installation	32	3	35
	Aesthetics	0	6	6
	Fashion Design Production I	0	4	4
	Heating Ventilation & Air Conditioning	8	0	8
	Information Technology Entry Level	3	1	4
	Information Technology Support Specialist	5	0	5
	Natural Hair Styling	1	10	11
	Nail Technology	1	16	17
	Office Assistant	4	19	23
	Plumbing	4	0	4
	Welding	2	1	3
	Total	**110**	**115**	**225**

Source: Bahamas Technical & Vocational Institute (BTVI).

Article 11: Employment

Legislation to Eliminate Discrimination in Employment and Wages

95. The provisions of the Employment Act 2001 (as amended) make it illegal for any employer to discriminate in recruitment and employment practices between men and women. Therefore, men and women have the right to the same employment opportunities including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment in law.

Recruitment and Employment Practices

96. As stated in the previous report, there is no discrimination in recruitment and employment practices between women and men in The Bahamas.

Employment-Related Information

97. Information on the following matters has not changed since the previous periodic report: Apprenticeships Equal pay legislation; Work-related benefits; Employment security; Apprenticeships; Parental leave; Dismissal of women for pregnancy; Paid leave; Provisions for flexible working patterns; Marital status and job security; Health and safety laws; Restrictions on women's employment; Childcare facilities; Legal measures regulating the operation of early childhood facilities; Percentage of employers providing childcare; and After-school care and Breastfeeding policy for the workplace.

Unemployment

98. The unemployment rate for The Bahamas in 2015 was 14.8 per cent: for women, 17.0 per cent; and for men, 12.7 per cent.

Labour Force Participation

99. The labour force participation rate for that year was 75.6 per cent — a marginal increase from the 73.4 per cent reported in the previous periodic report. The labour force participation rate for males and females were 80.5 per cent and 71.9 per cent, respectively.

100. The Department of Statistics' Labour Force Survey (November 2015) indicated that:

- 20 percent of all employed persons were employed by Government or Government Corporations;
- 65 percent were employed by Private Business/Apprentice;
- 15 percent were self-employed;
- Less than 1 percent of these employed persons were unpaid family workers; and
- Less than 1 percent did not state their employment status.
- When disaggregated by sex:
- 25 percent of females were employed by Government or Government Corporations, compared to 15 percent males;
- 64 percent of the females were employed by Private Business/Apprentice, compared to 65 percent males;
- 10 percent of the females were self-employed compared to 20 percent of the males; and
- 370 females were unpaid family workers, compared to 0 males.

101. Further, data from the Department of Statistics shows that men dominated most industrial groups while women dominated in Hotels and Restaurants; Financing, Insurance, Real Estate & Other Business; and Community, Social & Personal Services. Men dominated in Agriculture, Hunting, Forestry & Fisheries; Mining, Quarrying, Electricity, Gas, Water; Construction and Transport, Storage & Communication (See Table 14 in below).

Table 12
Employed Persons by Sex and Industrial Group November 2015 — All Bahamas

	Total		*Women*		*Men*	
Industrial Group	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Agriculture, Hunting, Forestry & Fisheries	3 010	2	145	0	2 865	3
Mining, Quarrying, Electricity, Gas, Water	2 850	2	640	1	2 210	2
Manufacturing	6 960	4	2 540	3	4 420	5
Construction	18 250	10	1 080	1	17 170	18
Wholesale & Retail	24 900	14	11 530	13	13 370	14

	Total		Women		Men	
Industrial Group	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Hotels & Restaurants	33 095	18	20 000	11	13 095	14
Transport, Storage & Communication	12 905	7	4 690	5	8 215	9
Financing, Insurance, Real Estate & Other Business	12 355	7	7 790	45	4 565	5
Community, Social & Personal Services	68 150	37	40 660	45	27 490	29
Not Stated	1 440	1	840	1	600	1
Total	**183 915**	**100**	**89 915**	**100**	**94 000**	**100**

Source: Department of Statistics.

The Minimum Wage Order (2015)

102. During the period under review, the Government increased the national minimum wage by 40% — i.e. from a minimum of $150/week, $30/day, $4/hour to $210/week, $42/day, and $5.25/hour.

The National Training Agency

103. The National Training Agency, described in Article 10, is a skills development agency and also operates as a job placement entity — See Article 10 in this report for more information about the agency.

Employment Exchange Unit

104. The Employment Exchange Unit is situated in the Department of Labour (DOL). Among the main tasks of this unit, this entity assists with matching job seekers with employers. The number of women accessing this service during the reporting period surpasses those of men, as can be seen in the table below.

Table 13
Bahamas Employment Exchange: 1st January, 2011-31st December, 2015

Activity	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*
New Registrant	11 142 (56%)	8 755 (44%)	19 897
Return Interview	22 012 (40%)	33 505 (60%)	55 517
Referral	4 538 (49%)	4 775 (51%)	9 313
Placement	788 (55%)	647 (45%)	1 435

Source: Department of Labour.

Citizen Security and Justice Program

105. In 2015, the DOL was identified as a key participating government agency with respect to the implementation of three components of the captioned program. Component I, the High Risk Youth Program, aims to facilitate employability training for at least 1,250 youth over a four-year period. Component II, the Youth Employment Program, is designed to provide 1,600 unemployed youth with job readiness skills — youth' refers to persons between the ages of 16 to 29. Component 3, Capacity Building of Public Employment Services, aims to strengthen the

Employment Exchange Unit. It is expected that the Inter-American Development Bank will provide hardware, software, and training for staff at Employment Exchange — including proposed sub-offices.

Article 12: Equality in Access to Health Care

106. Since the previous report, information has not changed regarding: ensures to eliminate discrimination against women in health care; efforts to ensure women have equal access to health-care services; prenatal health care; antenatal and post-natal reproductive health services; and nutrition support for pregnant and lactating women.

107. Women are able to access health facilities throughout the islands.

Mental Health

108. Mental Health Teams are regularly deployed to offer services to Family Island residents, including during natural disasters. For example, during the aftermath of Hurricane Joaquin teams were deployed to islands that were affected to provide specialized care. There is a need to increase the number of trained mental health professionals in The Bahamas. The Sandilands Rehabilitative Centre facilitates an annual mental health symposium which allows an opportunity for an exchange of experiences. The Bahamas recognizes the need to increase the number of trained mental health professionals in the country. Recognizing the challenges around mental health, The Ministry of Health has launched a pilot programme to assess the mental health of individuals accessing health care. The Programme is being conducted on the islands of Andros, Abaco and Eleuthera and is also conducted in four clinics on New Providence, namely Fleming Street Clinic, Flamingo Gardens Clinic, South Beach Clinic and Gambier Village Clinic. In respect to the mental health of pregnant women, the Ministry of Health indicates that an antenatal survey is conducted and expectant mothers are tracked throughout their pregnancy. If issues are detected, individuals would be referred to the Sandilands Rehabilitative Centre (SRC), which focuses on mental issues.

Infrastructure: Organization and Facilities

109. In 2013, there were five hospitals inclusive of private and public facilities. These facilities provide a total in excess of one thousand and sixty four (1,064) hospital beds which includes those available to public and private patients. To ensure health coverage among the population, a total of sixty one (61) health centres/main clinics exist on the island of New Providence and in the Family Islands. The health centres are supported by thirty four (34) satellite clinics throughout our islands.

Female Mortality and Morbidity

110. In 2012, the major causes of female mortality included HIV/AIDS, Malignant Neoplasm of the Breast, and Pulmonary Heart Disease & Diseases of Pulmonary Circulation, Influenza & Pneumonia and Land Transport Accidents.

Maternal Mortality

111. Efforts to prevent maternal deaths and sustain gains have focused on pregnancy health, management of chronic non-communicable diseases in pregnancy and early intervention for high-risk pregnancies.

Table 14
Maternal mortality statistics for The Bahamas: 2012-2014

Year	*Number*	*Rate per 10,000*
2012	4	13.1
2013	3	5.5
2014	3	5.5

Source: *Ministry of Health*.

Infant and Child Mortality Rates

112. The infant mortality rate in 2012 was 14. Child (Under 5) mortality rate per 1000 live births in 2012 was as follow: males, 18; and females, 16.

Women's Life Expectancy

113. In The Bahamas, women live longer than men. Life expectancy at birth in 2013 was 78.3 for females and 72.6 for males.

Crude Birth and Death Rates for Men and Women

114. The crude birth rate in The Bahamas for the year 2012 was 15.4 per 1000. The crude death/mortality rate of The Bahamas for the same year was 6 per 1000 population.

Contraceptive Prevalence

115. There is free access to contraceptives and sexual reproductive health services at Government Clinics throughout the islands of The Bahamas. Presently, there is no way of collecting data on contraceptive usage in the private clinics. However, in the government clinics for the year 2015 the usage is indicated in the following table:

Table 15
Female contraceptive usage: 2012-2015

Contraceptive Type	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*
Depo-Provera	20 197	16 623	18 238	17 731
Mesigyna	3 165	2 973	2 904	2 046
Noristerat	621	501	592	619
Total Injectables	**23 983**	**20 097**	**21 734**	**20 396**
Roselle	1 196	1 192	–	–
Microgynon	5 454	4 391	8 003	8 882
Gynera	4 529	4 083	1 944	72
Femianne	806	588	861	176
Total Orals	**11 985**	**10 254**	**10 808**	–
Jadelle	–	–	118	108

Source: *Ministry of Health*.

116. Additional information regarding reproductive health services, perinatal services, the lactation management programme, adolescent health services, rape

services, abortion, adolescent health services, and traditional health workers remains unchanged since the previous report.

Women Workers in the Health Sector

117. In public institutions in 2015 there were 2,361 females in various positions in the health sector. This number reflected the vast majority of persons employed. Women represented the majority in all disciplines — physicians, nursing and allied health.

HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases

118. There was a total of 328 newly diagnosed HIV cases in The Bahamas as of 2013 with 169 (52%) being male and 159 (48%) being female. In the year 2012, there were a total of 293 persons newly diagnosed with HIV which represented a 34% decrease from the 447 cases diagnosed in 2003. Of the total persons newly diagnosed, females slightly outnumbered males (51% vs. 49%). As previously reported, there are several pieces of legislation that pertain to this issue including the Employment Act Chapter 321(A) Section 6, the Health Service Act, the Venereal Diseases Act and Chapter 99 Section 8 Part 2 & Section 16 of the Sexual Offences Act, which was amended in 2011.

119. Regarding HIV and AIDS, we have two HIV clinics at the Princess Margaret Hospital — the Adult HIV Clinic and the Women and Children HIV Clinic. Women and girls are assisted through both. As part of a comprehensive system for treatment these clinics provide care and support, by conducting assessments and referrals for gender-based violence. The Centre also provides consistent training for their staff and requires all staff to sign an Anti-Discrimination Policy which is renewed annually. As a part of its programming, the Centre reaches out to key populations inclusive of commercial sex workers, persons with Disabilities, the men who have sex with men (MSM) community, the LGBT and other communities. During the reporting period, the Centre has conducted approximately 40 outreaches per year; the average number of people reached annually is approximately six thousand persons.

Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights

120. Regarding the promotion of awareness of sexual reproductive health and rights, The Bahamas Sexual Rights and Reproductive Health Association (BASHRA) and The National AIDS Centre's Prevention Unit regularly conduct community outreach. Related programmes are conducted by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health including, for example, Focus on Youth Programme (school based), peer counselling and education services. Age appropriate education has been incorporated into the syllabus for schools. Presently, the Health Education Unit is designing a programme for high school students with a view to raising awareness around teen pregnancy, STDs, HIV, and AIDS prevention. The Ministry of Health continues its efforts to raise awareness about sexual reproductive health for school-aged children including as a part of the Family Life & Health Education curriculum.

Breast Cancer Awareness

121. Regarding breast cancer awareness, the Cancer Society of The Bahamas collaborates with various organizations. Additionally, the Sister-Sister Support Group increases awareness throughout the country utilizing churches, community organizations and *Education Lunch & Learn*. Women's organizations are also targeted and information shared which increases awareness among their members.

The Bahamas Breast Cancer Initiative Foundation which provides genetic testing and counselling for relatives of persons with the BRCA gene. The Ride for Hope Initiative sponsors full time educators to increase awareness of breast cancer. Efforts are also made in partnership with the Susan G. Komen Foundation.

122. Regarding access to health care services, the Ministry of Health provides screening for HIV, Hepatitis B, and PAP smears. Through the Ministry of Health, the cost of mammograms in the public health care system has been reduced.

National Prescription Drug Plan

123. The National Prescription Drug Plan (NPDP) was introduced in 2010 with 6,500 beneficiaries. By 2014, that number has more than quadrupled to 26,631 beneficiaries. There are 55 private pharmacies and 71 public pharmacies participating in the NPDP. Since the inception of the Plan, a total of $27.2 million has been paid to private pharmacies for prescriptions filled and $2.87 million to the public pharmacies.

Family Planning and Male Involvement

124. In the area of family planning, persons requesting or accessing care are predominantly women. Women are able to receive contraceptives without male involvement. If a male requires services for family planning himself, he is able to access care at clinics that are available for the general public. Additionally, there is a male health clinic that has been established to address the health concerns of men in the population.

Article 13: Ensuring Equality for Women in Economic and Social Life in The Bahamas

125. Since the submission of the previous report, information has not changed with respect to: *Ensuring equality for women in economic and social life*; *Access to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit*; and *Right to participate in recreational activities, sports and cultural life*.

Article 14: Rural women

126. Information regarding *Rural women's participation in development planning and Rural women's access to adequate health-care facilities* has not changed since the previous submission.

Rural Women's Ability to Access Education and Training

127. According to the Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, the country has signed a loan from the Caribbean Development Bank to assist in the reconstruction of accommodations in New Providence for students from the Family Islands. The Ministry of Education also facilitates a partial scholarship for Family Island students to obtain secondary education on New Providence. A similar arrangement is available for Family Island students to access tertiary education on Grand Bahama, if it is more geographically feasible. Links Inc. Bahamas, a local nongovernmental organization, also provides limited housing for students. During November 2015, the Bureau of Women's Affairs facilitated a Women's Backyard Farming Workshop on the island of Exuma. The workshop was organized by the Bureau in collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on

Agriculture (IICA), the Exuma Foundation and The Bahamas Agricultural and Industrial Cooperation (BAIC).

Rural Women and the Department of Agriculture

128. According to the Department of Agriculture, it is estimated that 28% of women who are involved in agriculture are in the rural areas of the country. There are marketing facilities, called packing houses which are produce exchanges, located throughout the country and are available for all to use, regardless of sex.

129. Provision of agricultural extension services is one of the functions facilitated by the Department of Agriculture and is available to all citizens, regardless of sex. It is estimated that less than 1% of agricultural loans are currently held by women.

Bahamas Agricultural and Industrial Cooperation (BAIC)

130. The Bahamas Agricultural and Industrial Corporation (BAIC), in collaboration with The Bahamas National Crafts Association, offers training to help enhance the talents of women in the production of hand-and-craft items and other Bahamian products. BAIC also facilitates the local produce exchanges throughout the country. It is estimated that 28% of women use the Packing Houses during the reporting period. During the months of January-March of 2016, the BAIC indicated that 58% of farmers who were paid for produce brought for sale into the Packing Houses were female. This data is representative of five islands with Packing Houses in operation.

Bahamas Development Bank (BDB)

131. The Bahamas Development Bank (BDB) is a Government corporation established to promote economic development through financing viable projects sponsored by Bahamian or Bahamian owned businesses. At the BDB, 70% of the staff is women. Women have occupied positions at all levels, from entry level to Managing Director. Women have participated in the making of polices at the Board of Directors for decades at the BDB. Of the ten Directors appointed in 2012, five were women. As of March 2016, the number of members of the Board was reduced because of voluntary exits but women's participation still remained high with four of the nine Directors being women. Further, it is observed that during the reporting period, a total of 833 loans were granted. Of the total loans, 546 (66%) were awarded to males and 287 (34%) were awarded to females.

Rural Women and Cooperatives

132. Historically, there has been a number of women sponsored Cooperatives. The National Women's Cooperative Credit Union Limited (January 10, 1975) and was the first registered rural women Cooperative. This Cooperative educated its members in self-help methods and encouraged women to set aside savings toward the 'down' (initial) payment for a home. The Cooperative had five hundred members and several low cost houses were constructed for members. The North Long Island Cooperative Society Limited (April 17, 1978), for example, served as a multi-purpose marketing Cooperative which sought to empower women and provide economic opportunities by marketing its members' agricultural products such as Yuma Rum and various rum products such as cakes. The Cooperatives also produced and marketed straw work (products) for its members.

133. The Department of Cooperatives reports that rural women are taking a renewed interest in Cooperatives. There are several groups finalizing registration, including, for example, The Bahamas Rural Women's Cooperative Society Limited', which is based on Grand Bahama, and 'The Young Bahamian Women Agri-Business Cooperative Society Limited. The Bahamas Rural Women's Cooperative Society

Limited based in Grand Bahama seeks to help develop and enhance Agri-Business in The Bahamas. Its mandate is to help women benefit from sustainable economic opportunities. Its purpose statement is to financially empower women; educate its members on how to operate their businesses in collaboration with other members and for economies of scales to purchase merchandise, inputs and market their produce.

134. The Young Bahamian Women Agri-Business Entrepreneur Cooperative Society Limited is multi-purposed and will focus on the Agri-Business sector, while concentrating on financial security, shared equity and food security for its members. Its purpose is to facilitate economic development, improve economic, social and conditional standards of production in socially challenged areas, and to collaborate with other entities geared towards the development and empowerment of women. In the area of Producer/Service Cooperatives efforts to increase the availability of training for women to become entrepreneurs and better skilled craft persons have been encouraged through the access to grants for training and resources. The Department of Cooperatives in the execution of its Mandate to develop Cooperatives has been in active collaboration with the following agencies: The Bahamas Cooperative League Limited; The Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions; The World Council of Credit Unions; The Departments of Agriculture and Marine Resources; The Bahamas Agricultural and Industrial Society (BAIC); The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA); The Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bahamas; and the Embassy of the United States of America.

135. Additionally, the Government provides an annual grant (subvention) through the Department of The Bahamas Cooperative League of $50,000 to assist in the development of Cooperatives, particularly for training. Women have been an integral part of all other Cooperatives registered in The Bahamas since 1975 and have held executive posts. Each of these agencies are legally constituted and registered with Articles of Association and Memoranda of Association.

The Bahamas Network for Rural Women Producers (BAHNROP)

136. In October, 2015, the Bureau of Women's Affairs in partnership with The Bahamas Network for Rural Women Producers (BAHNROP) and the Huairou Commission produced a video documentary showcasing female farmers in their agricultural and other entrepreneurial pursuits, in commemoration of United Nations International Rural Women's Day. The documentary was aired on the Broadcasting Corporation of The Bahamas which is the national television station. BAHNROP was launched in January 2014 to improve the standard of living of rural women producers through training, cultural exchange, networking and the promotion of regional and international trade. Members are involved in a wide range of products from designer clothing to straw and sisal handbags, jewellery, livestock, fresh agricultural produce, teas, pepper sauce, jams and jellies as well as recycling. BAHNROP was formed under the Exuma Woman Project (EWP) which is a project funded by UN Women and managed by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) in The Bahamas. It is a chapter of the Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (CANROP).

Article 15: Equality before the Law and in Civil Matters

137. Information has not changed relative to *Equality in treatment*; *Women's administration of property*; *Equality in women's disposal of property*; *Women's access to justice, Legal aid*; and *Women's freedom of movement* in The Bahamas.

Article 16: Ensuring Equality for Women in Marriage and Family Life

138. Information has not changed relative to *Women's right to marriage*; *Non-married cohabitants*; *Marriage protections*; *Women's rights and responsibilities during marriage*; *Women's right to choose a profession*; *Equal rights to property ownership*; and *Women's equality in divorce*. Information has not changed *Custody of children*; *Child adoption*; *Child maintenance*; Age *of sexual consent and Inheritance* in The Bahamas.

Part 2

Concluding Recommendation 1: Parliament

139. The Commonwealth of The Bahamas continues its efforts to progressively implement the Convention, to raise awareness among Parliamentarians, and has taken necessary steps to follow through on its reporting obligations with the submission of the current report.

Concluding Recommendation 2: Visibility of the Convention and Access to Justice

140. The Government through the Office of the Attorney General has, since the release of the Concluding Observations from the CEDAW Committee, disseminated the document at quarterly meetings with Bahamas Civil Society and The Bahamas Christian Council and, National Reporting Cooperation Mechanism and Migration Working group meetings. Members of the Judiciary were also provided with a copy. Through the Bureau of Women's Affairs, the concluding observations were disseminated to nongovernmental organizations.

Concluding Recommendation 3: Constitutional and Legislative Protection of Women from Discrimination

141. Refer to Article **2** and **Article 3** of this present Report.

Concluding Recommendation 4: Legislative Framework

142. Until the Constitutional amendments mentioned above are enacted, The Bahamas is unable to effect a comprehensive revision of domestic law or to enact new legislation to bring domestic provisions into line with the Convention.

Concluding Recommendation 5: National Machinery for the Advancement of Women

143. During the period under review, the capacity of the BWA was strengthened to better support its work on advocacy and policy to promote women's rights. Although its budget remained the same since the previous reporting period, efforts were made to enhance the staff and the unit was relocated to more spacious accommodations.

Further reference is made in **Article 3** of this present Report.

Concluding Recommendation 6: Temporary Special Measures

144. The Interim (Follow-Up) Report of 2014 provided information related to this Concluding Recommendation. Further reference is made in Article 4 of this Present Report.

Concluding Recommendation 7: Stereotypes and Harmful Practices

145. The Government appreciates the importance of this Recommendation and the State is reviewing the application of the same.

Concluding Recommendation 8: Violence against Women

146. The National Strategic Plan for Addressing Gender-Based Violence, as referenced in Article 5, defines GBV and the scope and depth of the problem. It provides the rationale and approach for the development of a national strategy to address GBV, lays out the structure for a GBV Authority and lists the ten programmes to be implemented in the first year of the establishment of the GBV Authority.

147. The assistance and protection for women victims of violence, for example, are vital parts of the proposals contained in the above-mentioned plan. The Strategic Plan also envisages the strengthening of psychosocial rehabilitation and safe shelter facilities as well as the setup of Family Island Councils to better address GBV throughout The Bahamas, there are plans approved by Cabinet to create new programmes for psycho-social rehabilitation and to provide Family Island 'councils'. Further reference is made in the subsection **Violence against Women** in **Article 5** of this present Report.

Concluding Recommendation 9: Trafficking and Exploitation of Prostitution

148. Refer to **Article 6** of this present Report.

Concluding Recommendation 10: Participation in Political and Public Life

149. Refer to **Article 3** and **Article 4** of this present Report.

Concluding Recommendation 11: Nationality

150. Refer to **Article 1**, **Article 2** and **Article 9** of this present Report for information relating to **Nationality**.

Concluding Recommendation 12: Education

151. Regarding the issue of ***Male Dominated Fields and Non-traditional fields of Education and Careers***, refer to the **Employment** subsection of **Part I** of this present Report. Regarding he Family Life and Health Education curriculum, as noted in Article 10, gender stereotypes and gender equality have been incorporated in the 2013 revised versions of the curriculum.

Concluding Recommendation 13: Employment

152. In regard to Paid ***Maternity Leave***, the Maternity Grant facilitated by the National Insurance Board (N.I.B.) was increased from $450 to $465 in July 2014. The Employment Act 2001 Section 6 promotes non-discrimination and equal pay.

Concluding Recommendation 14: Health

153. Refer to Article 12 of this report.

Concluding Recommendation 15: Marriage and Family Relations

154. A Family Court System for The Bahamas was proposed in August, 2008. Recently, sub-committees of the Family Court System Committee have been working to produce rules and civil procedures which will be utilized in the Family

Court System. It is expected that a Family Court will soon be established and operational. At this time there are no discussions to extend legal provisions for couples living in common law unions.

Concluding Recommendation 16: National Human Rights Institution

155. The establishment of a Human Rights Commission continues to be discussed and researched. The establishment of a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principle is still under consideration. We are presently gathering and reviewing models from the National Institutions Section of OHCHR.

Concluding Recommendation 17: Optional Protocol

156. At this time, the country does not support this recommendation to ratify the optional protocol.

Concluding Recommendation 18: Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

157. In keeping with the Beijing Platform for Action 20th Anniversary, the Bureau of Women's Affairs gave focus to the 12 critical areas of concern. Copies of the twelve areas of concern were disseminated, including to women's NGOs, to bring greater awareness on the topics to their members.

Concluding Recommendation 19: Millennium Development Goals

158. In collaboration with UN Women, inter alia, The Government of The Bahamas participated in a Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Consultation prior to CSW for in Mexico City from 6th to 7th February, 2014. The meeting discussed the challenges and achievements of women and girls in the Americas. At the 58th CSW Session, Minister with responsibility for Women's Affairs, the Honourable Melanie Griffin, Minister of Social Services & Community Development, presented a statement on The Bahamas' progress on accomplishing the MDGs. At both meetings, the Minister noted that, despite challenges, the country has continued to work toward achieving the MDGs including through the introduction of the Urban Renewal 2.0 programme (to assist in poverty reduction efforts) and the National Climate Change Adaptation Policy (which addresses sustainable development approaches).

Concluding Recommendation 20: Dissemination

159. The Bureau of Women's Affairs, continued its efforts to disseminate the concluding observations including through a Stakeholder Meeting held in May 2015 in which the following entities were represented: Health and Family Life Unit, Primary Health and Family Life Unit; Department of Education; Adolescent Health Unit; Ministry of Health; Department of Statistics; Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute; the Providing Access to Continued Education (P.A.C.E.) Foundation; Bahamas Bar Association; local office of the Organization of American States (OAS); Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration; Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO); Eugene Dupuch Law School; local office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); Caribbean Association For Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA); Society Against Stigmatization and Hate (SASH); Disability Affairs Division; Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs; Ministry of Social Services and Community Development; Ministry of National Security; the Women's Branch of the Free National Movement (FNM); Department of Social Services; Royal Bahamas Police Force (R.B.P.F.); and the Bureau of Women's Affairs.

160. Further reference to this Concluding Recommendation is made in **Article 3** of this present Report.

Concluding Recommendation 21: Ratification of Other Treaties

161. Refer to Article 2 of this report — subsection "International Agreements".

Concluding Recommendation 22: Follow-up to Concluding Observations

162. In July 2014, The Government of the Bahamas submitted its interim report in accordance with the Committee's request for follow-up information on paragraph 20 (violence against women) and paragraph 24 (temporary special measure) in the Concluding Observations.

Concluding Recommendation 23: Technical Assistance

163. During the Reporting Period, the Government has worked on strengthening cooperation with specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations system and is committed to further strengthening its partnerships. Refer to Article 6 of this report for further information.